D14AAZDOS Sentence UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 1 SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK 2 3 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 4 07 CR 440 (PGG) V. 5 VLADIMIR ZDOROVENIN, Defendant. 6 7 -----x 8 New York, N.Y. January 4, 2013 9 2:45 p.m. 10 Before: 11 HON. PAUL G. GARDEPHE, 12 District Judge 13 14 **APPEARANCES** 15 PREET BHARARA United States Attorney for the 16 Southern District of New York JAMES PASTORE 17 Assistant United States Attorney 18 SABRINA SHROFF Attorney for Defendant Zdorovenin 19 20 21 ALSO PRESENT: YANA AGOUREEV, Russian Language Interpreter ANDREW TAPUTZ, Russian Language Interpreter 22 23 24 25

1 (Case called)

MR. PASTORE: Jim Pastore, for the United States.

Joining me at counsel table is a special agent Andy Dodd of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

MS. SHROFF: Good afternoon, your Honor.

For the defendant, Sabrina Shroff, from the Federal Defenders Office. My client is seated to my right.

THE COURT: All right. This matter is on my calendar for purposes of sentencing. I've read the presentence report dated May 9, 2012. I've read Ms. Shroff's amended sentencing submission dated December 26 and her reply submission dated January 1st along with the letters from the defendant's family and friends. I've also read the government's amended sentencing submission dated December 30th.

Ms. Shroff, have you read the presentence report and its recommendation and discussed it with your client?

MS. SHROFF: I have, your Honor.

THE COURT: Mr. Zdorovenin, has the presentence report and its recommendation been read to you in Russian and have you discussed it with Ms. Shroff?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. Ms. Shroff, do you have any objections to the factual portions of the presentence report?

MS. SHROFF: No, your Honor. I mean other than the way I've clarified them in my sentencing submission, I don't

have any which I seek to amend.

THE COURT: Well, you had raised objections to three paragraphs in the report. I think from the perspective of whether your client had actually committed the conduct it's discussed. And those paragraphs deal with the theft of credit card numbers and the surreptitious insulation of a computer virus program on people's computers, transmission of data from those computers to your client's son, as well as the operation of three websites and then the illegally accessing customer's brokerage accounts to use them to buy and sell securities. And I think your point was that that was all conduct that the son did.

MS. SHROFF: That's right, your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. Does the government dispute that?

MR. PASTORE: Well, your Honor, with respect, I believe it's Paragraphs 18 through 20, that we're discussed in the --

THE COURT: Yes.

MR. PASTORE: I'll note that at least in the government's reading of those it does distinguish between actions taken by Koreal on the one hand and Vladimir on other. For example, in Paragraph 18 it is says Koreal Zdorovenin used a computer virus program that was surreptitiously installed on to the victim's computer.

THE COURT: Sometimes it distinguishes and sometimes it doesn't.

MR. PASTORE: Correct.

THE COURT: So, for example, the first sentence says they both or could be read to say that they both purchased stolen credit card numbers. Is that true, that they both did it?

MR. PASTORE: The government's intention is, yes, your Honor, that both of them did it in participating in this conspiracy. In terms of how the presentence report is drafted right now, I don't think that there's any factual dispute between the parties because my understanding is that these actions were undertaken as part of the joint conspiracy.

THE COURT: All right. So are you content then with these paragraphs as they currently are written, Ms. Shroff?

MS. SHROFF: Well, I am not -- I don't seek to modify the recitation in the PSR largely because it's not relevant to my client's designation or anything that has come to follow. I think what Mr. Pastore is saying when he says it's jointly undertaken activity is that my client was aware. I don't think the government is staying that my client had that particular skill or savvy. And to the extent they're staying that, I would disagree with that but I think that's -- I think I've repeated myself that you are probably tired of hearing that refrain already but --

THE COURT: Well, understand that your client from a conspiracy perspective would be liable for foreseeable acts that his son committed in furtherance of the conspiracy. I understand that. And I suppose one could read these paragraphs that way but I wanted to give you an opportunity, if you wished, to request modification to the extent the paragraphs could be read to suggest that your client actually did these things personally.

MS. SHROFF: Your Honor, I think that the PSR sets forth the defense's objections to those. But I mean they're in the document, so I don't seek a word-for-word modification.

THE COURT: All right.

MS. SHROFF: But I do know that the presentence report notes our objections that Vladimir did not have those skills nor the technology.

THE COURT: Right. I think it's already been very clear in this case, certainly, it's been very clear to me that the technical knowledge here was possessed by the son and not by the father and the government has never argued to the contrary. I think that's very, very clear.

Mr. Pastore, does the government have any objections to the factual portions of the presentence report?

MR. PASTORE: No, your Honor.

THE COURT: Then I adopt the findings of fact as they're set forth in the presentence report. Although, I am

not required to impose sentence in accordance with the sentencing guidelines, I am required to consider the recommended range under the guidelines.

Here the probation department determined that Mr. Zdorovenin's base offense level is seven under Section 2B1.1A1 which addresses fraud. The probation department imposed a 14 level increase because the loss amount was between four hundred thousand and \$1 million.

The probation department further imposed a two level increase because the involved ten or more victims.

A further two level increase was imposed because a substantial part of the offense was committed outside of the United States.

An additional two level increase was imposed because the defendant was convicted under Title 18 U.S.C. Section 1030 which deals with computer fraud.

Because Mr. Zdorovenin demonstrated acceptance of responsibility, the probation department granted a three level reduction yielding an adjusted offense level of 24.

The probation department determined that the defendant has no criminal history and therefore he falls under criminal history category one.

Offense level 24, criminal history category one yields a guidelines range of 51 to 63 months imprisonment.

Ms. Shroff, does the defendant wish to raise any

objections to the accuracy of the guidelines calculations as they're set forth in the presentence report?

MS. SHROFF: No, your Honor. They comport with the plea agreement and we have no objection.

THE COURT: All right. Mr. Pastore do you have any objections to the guidelines calculations set forth in the presentence report?

MR. PASTORE: No, your Honor.

THE COURT: Based on my independent evaluation of the sentencing guidelines, I accept the calculations set forth in the presentence report. Accordingly, I find that the offense level is 24. The criminal history category is one and the recommended range under the guidelines is 51 to 63 months imprisonment.

I'll hear from you, Ms. Shroff, as to an appropriate sentence.

MS. SHROFF: Your Honor, I think that on behalf of Mr. Zdorovenin we have briefed pretty much why we think a sentence of 24 months would be a sufficient sentence and not greater than necessary to achieve the goals of sentencing.

Putting aside the personal characteristics of my client, I would like -- I don't want to repeat everything I've said in my letter but I do wish to reiterate that the loss guidelines -- and I could have provided for the Court as we've done in other loss cases from our office -- a computation of

how the loss guidelines have changed since Bernie Evers got elected and when Congress decided that the probationary sentences being handed down for white collar defendants were not achieving the goals they had set out to achieve and then thought the best way to proceed with white collar defendants was to impose short limited incarceratory sentences because they thought that that would best achieve the goals of sentencing.

The government in its reply seems to suggest, I believe they site to Simmons in one other case and suggesting that incarceration does, in fact, deter conduct. I have to, I have to, I have to side with what Judge Rakoff repeatedly says, not just about the loss guidelines but also about this notion of what general deterrence is. General deterrence although it's recited as a factor in the sentencing guidelines, there's absolutely no empirical evidence that it works.

More importantly, it assumes that somebody out there in either Russia or Malaysia or whatever is actually paying attention to a judge in the Southern District imposing a sentence. And then on top of that, drawing from that the lesson that they really ought not to commit the crime because they will similarly be punished and thereby general deterrence is achieved.

I focus on this because in terms of loss cases there is not a judge -- I shouldn't say there is not a judge because

I don't know of every loss case — but the recent loss cases and I believe I've cited them for the Court, including the case of Rajat Gupta, where he got a sentence of 24 months;

Mr. Rajaratnam, where he got a sentence far below the guideline range by Judge Holwell; the sentence of Mr. Adelson and

Mr. Parish; one by Judge Block; and again by Judge Rakoff; the sentence imposed on Mr. Bristol by Judge Batts; the sentence imposed by Judge Koeltl on Mr. Nadel. All of these show a pattern and surely the pattern suggests something. And the pattern suggests that the unusually high guidelines are not empirically sound and therefore the Court should not simply adopt those guidelines in the way it would other guidelines ranges.

The personal characteristics about my client all bear in his favor. They're, certainly, sympathetic ones. The money does not seem to have flowed to him. The government has no evidence that he personally profited from his money. His son remains in the wind. His son has never come forward to help out the father. The government doubts whether my client's story about the familial break-up is true but the government has not a scintilla of evidence to take issue with that story other than to say that he sounded like a knowledgeable guy when he was talking on the tapes and they do cite to the tapes. And even though they've withdrawn the attachments, the tapes are very much cited by government's submission and that's OK. They

can cite them.

But I don't think the government is going to stand up and say that those tapes are not replete with phrases such as, "I don't know". "Ask Curel". "I don't know". "Curel sent me". Curel is the one who finds, not just the confidential cooperator in the end but also the precursor to the cooperating witness. Curel is actually physically in Cypress when the meetings take place. There is no indication on any of these conversations that Curel is not just a major participant in this but Curel is the guy to whom the phrase "Curel knows" or "Curel told me" or "Curel should be consulted by".

And I don't want to be perceived as saying you know my client had nothing to do with anything. If he had nothing to do with anything there would not have been a guilty plea. He's pled guilty. The question really is just how far his reach was?

Other than that, I don't have anything more to tell the Court but I think all those facts put together do suggest and call for a departure from the guidelines range and sentence of 24 months. I remind the Court also that Mr. Zdorovenin will be deported. I remind the Court that he spent a substantial amount of time in Switzerland and he should be credited that time from whatever sentence is imposed here because he wasn't incarcerated there on any open matter either in the Southern District or in any other country, so that time should be

credited for him.

And finally there has to be some inference drawn from the fact of his age and the fact that this is his first offense. He is a true category one. He has zero criminal history points. There is no other crime that he has committed that was 20 years old for which he is not getting a criminal history computation. This is man who really has a criminal history.

All of those facts put together, your Honor, should lead the Court to depart and vary from the guidelines range and impose a sentence of 20 months. This would be in keeping with the majority of the well respected jurists sitting in this courthouse as well as the courthouse across the street.

Unless the Court has any more questions that's what I have to say on behalf of my client.

THE COURT: All right. Mr. Zdorovenin, is there anything you'd like to say before the Court imposes sentence?

THE COURT: You can be seated. And pull the mic close to you if you want.

(Pause)

THE DEFENDANT: Thank you.

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, your Honor.

Your Honor, I committed a crime. I understand my responsibility in regards to this crime. I am not withstanding the motivations that I had to commit this crime, I should say

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Sentence

that they cannot justify this crime and make it not a crime. I am very sorry, your Honor, today for what I have committed not because of the crime, your Honor, only, but also because of the fact that I let my son participate in this offense. I think that this is my biggest crime. I feel complete pain because I did what I did with my family and today I want to say how sorry I am and that I am guilty of this crime that I committed. And I want to say sorry to those people to whom I caused to suffer losses and how sorry I am to those who were forced to investigate this offense.

And of course I am to blame where my family is All my life, your Honor, from my childhood I was concerned. raised as a protector of the family. I live in a country and continue to live in a country that went through significant changes in the lives of people there and not all of those changes were positive. But I tried in this time to protect my family, to give my sons a good education. But as a result what happened? I did everything contrary to my intentions and today at home my close ones, my loved ones are forced to go through this tragedy together with me. My old mother, my elderly mother who is afraid that she will never see me again, my young son who is five who is growing up without my support and my love. You know, your Honor, how kids grow up so fast and how important it is for the children to have both of their parents when they're growing up, both parents who love them and take

care of this them.

Your Honor, before you render a sentence and punish me I want to ask you for leniency for my family because they're forced to be punished together with me, unfortunately and they will suffer more than I will. And this lesson that I have learned here will be with me for the rest of my life and I am completely sure I will never repeat such mistakes. Thank you, your Honor, for your attention.

THE COURT: Mr. Pastore, is there anything you want to say?

MR. PASTORE: Most of what the government wants to say is contained in its sentencing submission. Your Honor, primarily the defendant seeks a below guidelines sentence on the basis of his motivation and a general attack on the idea of deterrence. As the government noted in its sentencing submission, whatever the motivation, the crime was a serious one. And as even now the defendant candidly admits he played a significant role in that crime. And for the reasons set forth in our sentencing submissions we don't believe that a wholesale attack on general deterrence is really important in any case. But in particular, in this case the guidelines seem commensurate with the defendant's activities. There are 51 to 63 months. And in most of the cases that the defendant cites the guidelines were substantially higher and that's where we see a lot of comments made by the judges about the guidelines

1 ranges there.

Unless the Court has questions, the government is prepared to rest on its submission.

appropriate sentence, I have considered all of the factors listed in Title 18 U.S.C. Section 3553(A), including the nature and circumstances of the offenses to which the defendant pleaded guilty, his personal history and characteristics, the need for the sentence imposed to reflect the seriousness of the offenses, to promote respect for the law, to provide just punishment and to afford adequate deterrence.

I'll begin with the nature and circumstances of the offenses.

The defendant pleaded guilty to a Section 371 conspiracy, the objects of which involved, among other things, wire fraud.

He also pleaded guilty to one substance count of wire fraud.

The defendant's co-conspirator was his son, Curel.

The defendant and his son played difficult roles in the fraud conspiracy. His son's role included obtaining stolen credit card numbers either by purchasing them or by using a computer virus program surreptitiously installed on a victim's computer to obtain the victim's credit card information and personal financial information. The virus permitted Curel to obtain the

victim's credit card and also other financial information as the victims typed that information into their computers.

This conduct took place in Russia but through the Internet it was possible to victimize United States citizens both in New York and elsewhere. The crimes took place between March of 2004 and March 2005 but the defendant was not arrested until 2011 when he traveled to Switzerland. The defendant's son is a fugitive.

Curel charged purchases on the stolen credit card numbers and hacked into victim's brokerage accounts and used those accounts to manipulate stock prices for personal gain. The fraudulent proceeds were laundered through websites that were reported to be legitimate businesses. The activities of the defendant and his son caused losses of between four hundred thousand and \$1 million. While Curel was responsible for the technical aspects of the fraud, the defendant was responsible for providing bank accounts which could be used to accept the fraudulent proceeds that Curel was generating.

The defendant discussed the details of his movements of the fraud proceeds during his four hour meeting in Cypress with someone who he thought was a potential co-conspirator but who in reality was a government cooperator.

The defendant also permitted his son to use an Ameritrade account held by the defendant's company, Rim Investment Management Limited, to purchase and sell the

securities that Curel traded with the stolen accounts. While it is clear that the defendant understood that his son was using the Internet and the stolen credit card numbers to commit fraud, there is no evidence that he understood all the technical details. To the contrary, it is undisputed that the technical aspects of the fraud scheme were handled by the son. It seems clear that the fraudulent scheme was devised by the son.

The government has also not rebutted the defendant's claim that he did not benefit financially from the fraud. In papers the defendant has argued that he should be treated less severely because his criminal acts were not motivated by greed, but rather out of a desire to repair his relationship with his son which had been disturbed or frayed after the defendant divorced Curel's mother.

In my view and as the defendant himself said this afternoon, assuming that the motive was to repair the relationship with the son, in my judgment it does not mitigate the defendant's culpability. When his son first approached him about participating in the fraud the defendant's response as he himself indicated this afternoon should have been "no" quickly followed by an attempt to persuade his son to stop using his considerable technical abilities to commit fraud. The defendant was not helping his son in any useful or productive way by agreeing to assist him in handling the fraud proceeds

that the son was generating.

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With respect to the defendant's personal history and characteristics, he is 55 years old and was born and raised in His father worked for the UN. His mother worked for a railroad company. He was raised primarily by grandparents. has two children by an ex-wife, including Curel, his co-conspirator in this case. As I noted, the defendant divorced Curel's mother and remarried and has a four year old son with his current wife. The family lives in Moscow. Mr. Zdorovenin has a bachelor's, masters, PhD all in geology from various institutions in Moscow. From 2005 until his arrest he supported himself by lecturing on geology at various universities in Russia and by assisting companies who wanted him to review various geological reports. Prior to that, during the period between 1998 and 2004 the defendant served as a business director for his company Rim Investment Management Limited in Russia. The defendant has no criminal record. involvement in this fraud scheme is difficult to reconcile with the rest of his life which otherwise seems to be admirable.

The guidelines recommended a sentence of 51 to 63 months. The probation department has recommended a sentence of 51 months in prison. The government seeks a guidelines sentence. The defense seeks a sentence of 24 months.

I conclude that a variance from the guideline is called for. The defendant is now 55 years old. In my judgment

he presents little to no risk of recidivism both because of his age and the fact that he has no criminal record. I believe that his involvement in the fraud scheme was aberrational and was undoubtedly at the volition of his son.

I must also consider the fact that there is no evidence that the defendant benefited in any way from the fraud. And in most fraud cases defendants either benefit financially from the fraud or would have benefited financially in some fashion were the fraud successful. There is know evidence that the defendant was involved any of the technical aspects of the fraud or that he even understood how his son was obtaining the stolen credit card information. If there were evidence that the defendant misused technical knowledge or abilities to commit the fraud here, I would likely not entertain any variance from the guideline range. That is not the case.

Having said all that, the defendant facilitated what in my judgment was a serious fraud with international ramifications. Without bank accounts to put the fraud proceeds in, the son would not have been able to reap the benefit of his fraudulent activities. And there is no question that the defendant knew that his son was using the Internet to steel from people thousands of miles away and that he chose to facilitate that activity. And in the amounts in question are not inconsequential.

With all of these facts and circumstances in mind I'll now describe the sentence I intend to impose and then I'll ask the parties if there's anything further they wish to say.

With respect to imprisonment, I intend to impose a sentence of 36 months imprisonment. I conclude that this amount of imprisonment is sufficient to satisfy all the purposes of sentencing as set forth in Section 3553(A).

I do not intend to impose is a period of supervised release because it is my expectation the defendant will be deported immediately after serving the sentence.

I do not intend to impose a fine because I find the defendant lacks the ability to pay the fine. I am required to impose a \$200 special assessment.

I have been handed a Consent Order of Forfeiture. It is my intention to sign the order.

Is the government seeking restitution?

MR. PASTORE: Your Honor, we respectfully request the 90 day period within which to provide the Court details about the victims, in particular, the identity and the amounts.

THE COURT: All right. Ms. Shroff, anything further you wish to say?

MS. SHROFF: Your Honor, I have no objection to this.

I am in no position to but I have an objection to the 36 month sentence. But I do wish to say Mr. Pastore's description of wholesale attack on the loss guidelines makes it sound that the

defense has somewhat done something awry or amiss. The loss guidelines should be wholesaley attacked as have been noted by Judge Rakoff and all the loss — there is nothing about those opinions that suggest that because the loss guidelines are on the lower range they are somehow more reasonable or more empirically sound. So just so that the law is accurately portrayed, Judge Rakoff's opinions do not say that the loss guidelines are reasonable or the guideline reasonable. I just wanted that to be part of the record in this case.

THE COURT: Well, let me say that I considered what the parties had to say about the various cases that have discussed the fraud guidelines. And first of all, I don't think Mr. Zdorovenin is similarly situated to any of the defendants involved in those cases for a variety of reasons. In some instances there's no question that the judge has been motivated by the fact that the imposition of a guideline sentence would result in what was effectively a life sentence and undoubtedly that influenced what they had to say.

I have considered the arguments about the fraud guidelines and taken them into account in my determination of what's was an appropriate sentence balancing all the factors in the case. And as I've said, I've concluded that the appropriate sentence here is 36 months.

Mr. Zdorovenin, is there anything further you wish to say?

1 THE DEFENDANT: (In English) Thank you. No. THE COURT: Mr. Pastore, anything else for government? 2 3 MR. PASTORE: I don't believe so. I may have missed 4 it, your Honor, but is your Honor imposing the mandatory 5 special assessments on the two counts? 6 THE COURT: Yes. I actually haven't imposed sentence 7 yet. I just told you what I intend to do. 8 MR. PASTORE: Certainly, your Honor. We have no 9 objection to the sentence as described. 10 THE COURT: Mr. Zdorovenin, for the reasons I just 11 stated, it is the judgment of this Court that you be sentenced 12 to 36 months imprisonment. You are ordered to pay a special 13 assessment in the amount of \$200. I am signing the consent 14 order of forfeiture which has been previously executed by the 15 parties and I will expect a proposed restitution order within 16 the next 90 days. 17 I believe there are open counts Mr. Pastore 18 MR. PASTORE: The government now moves to dismiss any open counts in this indictment against this defendant. 19 20 THE COURT: That motion is granted. 21 Ms. Shroff, do you have any requests as to an 22 appropriate institution? 23 MS. SHROFF: May I just have a second with my client? 24 THE COURT: Yes. 25 (Pause)

MS. SHROFF: Your Honor, my client doesn't have any family in the United States. We do ask for a designation as close to in the New York City area so that he has my offices and his lawyer as a continued contact.

I would ask, your Honor, that if the Court could possibly order that he receive -- and I know this might sound odd -- but if he could receive whatever dental care -- he can afford -- I know that my client would appreciate that. He is almost constantly in pain and regardless of the many requests we've made to the Bureau of Prisons we haven't had much success with getting him help

THE COURT: What's the nature of his problem?

MS. SHROFF: I think he has a receding gum in his lower teeth and he has lost like his front four teeth which make it difficult --

THE COURT: All right.

 $\operatorname{MS.}$  SHROFF: It seems to be a rather painful state of  $\operatorname{\mathsf{--}}$ 

THE COURT: All right.

MS. SHROFF: Thank you.

THE COURT: All right. I do recommend to the Bureau of Prisons that the defendant serve his remaining period of incarceration in New York City metropolitan area. And I ask the Bureau of Prisons to address the dental problems that counsel has referenced this afternoon.

Mr. Zdorovenin, I am required to advise you of your appeal rights. You can appeal your conviction if you believe that your guilty plea was unlawful or involuntary or there was some other fundamental defect in the proceedings that was not waived by your guilty plea.

You also have a statutory right to appeal your sentence under certain circumstances with few exceptions. And a any notice of appeal must be filed within ten days of judgment being entered into your case. The judgment will likely be entered on Monday. Ms. Shroff will discuss you whether or not you wish to file a notice of appeal. If you are not able to pay the cost of an appeal you may apply for leave to appeal in forma pauperis. If you request, the Clerk of the Court will prepare and file a notice of appeal on our behalf.

anything further?

MR. PASTORE: Nothing further from the government. Thank you.

(Adjourned )